

Making the Grade: School Program Menu for 5th Grades 2025-2026



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The following is a list of presentations offered to fifth grade classes in Jasper County. This is not a complete list, and for other options or questions about a program, please contact the naturalists. We work with teachers to fit our programming with their curriculum!

- All programs are free and materials will be provided unless otherwise noted.
- Although descriptions are for in-class, all programs can be adapted for outdoor locations.
- Please call or email at the beginning of the school year to guarantee your desired day and time.
- Plan for 30-40 minutes per program.
- Have your students come up with a list of questions for the naturalists before the scheduled program time.
- Please plan to sit with your class and enjoy the presentation along with them!

A Country So Full of Game

Students will be able to answer questions such as: Why do we have whitetail deer in Iowa, but not elk? What happened to cause the bison and black bear to disappear from the state? Students will learn the history of wildlife and wildlife management in Iowa. A classroom timeline gives students a close up look at some of Iowa's wildlife from the past and present.

***5-ESS3-1**

Outdoor Survival

If your students are reading "Julie of the Wolves," "Hatchet," or other survival-themed book, we have a great program that ties in! The naturalist will bring a variety of outdoor skills to share with students, including finding direction, what to do if you're lost, finding wild edible foods, how to build a shelter, building a fire, and how to use a compass. A great program even if you're not reading the book!



Earth's Four Spheres

Students will review geosphere, biosphere, hydrosphere and atmospheres and through several demonstrations and a water cycle game, will see how the spheres interact.



***5-ESS2-1, 5-ESS2-2**

Web of Life

The naturalist will review key terms such as ecosystem, producer, consumer, decomposer, habitat, and food webs. Students will become aware of the significance of interrelationships of living things as they create a classroom-sized food web. We will use several specific examples of food webs found in Iowa. If time allows, the class will play "Habitat Tag" either in the schoolyard or gym.

***5-PS2-1, 5-LS1-1, 5-LS2-1**

Who Gives a Hoot?

Students will be introduced to some common owls in Iowa and what adaptations make them such good predators. Wings and other owl "parts" will be used and students will listen to recordings of owl calls. Teachers may choose to provide owl pellets and the naturalist will lead the dissection process and provide bone sorting charts.



***5-PS3-1, 5-LS2-1**

What is JCCB?

Students will get a taste for what it means to work in the conservation field. Although many students may be familiar with what we do as naturalists in the schools, we will explore how the director, park rangers, maintenance technicians, and naturalists work together to protect and enhance local wildlife habitat.

***5-ESS3-1**

Extraterrestrial Explorations

Students will demonstrate with models how the earth and moon move in relation to the sun and how the moon cycles each month. We will briefly review the planets in our solar system and some constellations in our sky, along with other deep sky objects. Students will learn how a sky map is used and hear about what exciting things are currently happening in the universe! The naturalists can schedule a member of the Des Moines Astronomical Society to talk with students about what's in the night sky and demonstrate the different types of telescopes.

***5-ESS1-1, 5-ESS1-2**



Spring Programming and Field Trips

Any part or combination of these activities can be modified for your classroom life science unit and used as pre- and post-activities for the annual "Woodlands and Me" field trip at Ashton Wildwood Park. Please schedule classroom programs for March before the field trip season begins in April!

Twig Investigation

Students will study different tree twigs that the naturalist brings into the classroom. After learning the parts of a twig, students will use charts to practice their identification skills. Key terms covered include terminal bud, bud scale, leaf scar, growth rings, and opposite/alternate leaf arrangements. This program will cover the first five pages of the "Woodlands and Me" booklets.

***5-LS1-1**

Adopt a Tree

Students will investigate and collect information about a tree. Similar to the popular "My Special Place" or "Sit Spot" activities, "Adopt a Tree" will have students making observations such as: are there animals living in my tree, and what does my tree smell,

feel, look or sound like. They will also collect a leaf and bark rubbing from their tree and draw a map to show where the tree is located.

***5-LS1-1, 5-LS2-1**

Woodlands and Me Field Trip

Fifth grade classes travel to Ashton Wildwood Park (7 miles west of Baxter) and spend a day in the woods focusing on Iowa geology, trees, wildflowers and animals. Students will experience the changing spring forest through observational and sensory activities. They will contribute their observations to a large phenology wheel. A student workbook, provided by the conservation department, will track each student's journey from the classroom to the woods and back again to the classroom.

***5-LS1-1, 5-LS2-1, 5-ESS3-1, 5-PS3-1**

